



Women with Willie

Willie Nelson turned 84 this year, and I plan on seeing him at his Dallas show on July 2. Bob Dylan is joining several shows on this outlaw tour but not Dallas. I could focus on the women of Willie, but I am choosing the women in his family. First, Sister Bobbie. Her fingers on the piano keys invoke the gods of music to each stage, and angel flies over Willie all the time. When I interviewed Bobbie for my book on the women of Texas music, she was cooking beans to carry down the street to her brother. In many ways she has always taken care of her "little" brother. Yes, she is also older, an observation hard to believe with your eyes.



Lana Nelson and I talked at the Willie/Bob Dylan/Hot Club of Cowtown (2004) tour of baseball fields. We met up during the meal before the show, and she shared her story of taking care of dad. "I just like to take care of dad and Aunt Bobbie. I like to see that their immediate needs are taken care of. Dad has his office on the bus, so we do a ton of stuff coming out of that bus. I kind of help his life go more smoothly. That's my main goal; I don't know it happens. We start our in flight service when the bus takes off"(215).

Then I asked her what moved her." People move me...all kinds of people, I'm in awe of the human race. I love to study what people think and what hap-

pens to them. The young, the old, the rich, the poor, the homeless. All people. I wonder what happens to get people to death row. There's probably nothing I can do, but my own understanding of this will help me see my own life in a deeper way. I will be better off. If you understood what made people the way they are, the world might just shift. Humans are so complex...That's what music is, storytelling. A poem is a story"(217). Yes, Willie, the Buddha, the sage philosopher, is surrounded by women of wisdom.

One night recently at the Majestic Theatre I had the chance to be backstage for a rare opportunity. Willie's wife, Annie, was taking care of people backstage. Susie, one daughter had arrived to be with dad. Bobbie, who made my special visit possible, carried her wisdom to the stage as she was escorted gently to the piano. 86 years of grace. My hero. Lana had fixed a big April birthday meal for her dad, and her daughter, Martha and I reconnected. Martha stayed at my house once during the Kerrville Folk Festival then read poetry at a night with Kerouac I presented at Schreiner. I asked her about her poetry.

Don't miss Willie on tour this summer. Every moment becomes more precious. Jimmy LaFave taught us that at Threadgills in April when he announced his own "doom" after a good fight with an aggressive cancer. Live right now.

I hope to see him at the Kerrville Folk Festival as he is determined to keep teaching us about love and life until the end. The final prompt for my creative writing class was: "Endings are Beginnings." Dylan says, "He who is not busy being born is busy dying." Here's to being born. KH

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